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The Lost Spy: An American in Stalin's Secret Service by Andrew Meier, Norton, 2008

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Recommended Readings



The Lost Spy: An American in Stalin's Secret Service

by Andrew Meier, Norton, 2008

Reviewed by Jon Porter

In January 1943, the consular list of every U. S. citizen known to be living in the Soviet Union contained 169 names: 56 government officials, 30 students, 11 journalists, 4 teachers, a missionary, and Cy Oggins, an American citizen in Moscow's dreaded Butryka Prison. Meier, in this masterful book, tells his story, painstakingly reconstructed from private and governmental archives, including access to Oggins's censored KGB files.

The son of Russian Jewish emigrants, Oggins graduated from Columbia University and was soon recruited by Soviet operatives, working first for the Comintern in a Berlin safe-house, then moving to Paris to spy on exiled Romanovs for the OGPU (which later became the KGB), and then working undercover for the Soviets in Shanghai and Japanese-occupied Manchuria. Accused of being a double agent, he was arrested in Moscow in 1939 and sentenced to eight years in the gulag for espionage, despite the revelation at his trial that there was no evidence to confirm his guilt.

In 1947, his sentence completed, Oggins was "liquidated:" killed on Moscow's orders with an untraceable injection of curare to prevent him from revealing what he knew about clandestine Soviet operations and the horrors of the gulag. Beautifully written, *The Lost Spy* is a compelling story of youthful idealism during the great social upheaval between the wars and a haunting historical thriller.

-Jon Porter teaches in the interdisciplinary Global and Historical Studies Program at Butler University.